

THE VISITOR

The Congregational Church of Austin

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Rev. Thomas J. VandeStadt



In an interview with Amy Goodman on the radio talk show, *Democracy Now*, Nathan Schneider, who writes

for the Catholic weekly, *America*, made an insightful observation about Pope Francis' Encyclical on climate change, *Laudato Si*: this is the first Papal Encyclical ever to come from the Third World. The Encyclical gives a voice to poor, oppressed, and exploited people who live in poor, oppressed, and exploited parts of the earth. The author of the first draft of the Encyclical, Cardinal Peter Turkson, is from Ghana. Liberation Theologian, Leonardo Boff, from Brazil, also influenced the Encyclical's content. One of Boff's books is entitled, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*, which is one of the Encyclical's dominant themes.

Key to this "third world" perspective is the recognition that powerful people, powerful institutions, powerful systems, powerful ideologies, and powerful human drives are working in tandem to dominate, oppress, exploit, and abuse many people on this earth, as well as the earth itself. The earth is suffering. Poor people are suffering. And it's the very same confluence of powerful people and forces that are causing the earth and poor people to suffer. Speaking through its own natural voices, the earth is crying out against these powerful people and forces. And speaking through their voices of suffering and/or protest, poor people around the

earth are crying out. Cry of the earth, cry of the poor.

Moreover, and this is very important, the earth is suffering the most harm in those very places where the poor of the earth live. There is a close relationship between abusing the earth and abusing the poor. The earth suffers from more exploitation, abuse, and degradation in those very places where the poor suffer from exploitation, abuse, and degradation. This means the poor suffer even more because of the harm done to the earth where they live. It's a vicious downward spiral: abuse the earth where the poor live, and make the poor suffer the consequences of degraded, polluted, and despoiled land, water, and air.

In a nutshell, the encyclical makes the claim: powerful people and forces are treating the earth as if it were a poor person, and they're treating poor people as if they were the earth. In response, the earth is crying out, the poor are crying out.

Pope Francis has been bold in his call for structural political-economic change. He's an open and unabashed critic of our contemporary globalized corporate-dominated capitalist political-economy, and those who work its levers, manipulate it, and profit the most from it. There's no question that over the years, capitalism has raised the standard of living for many on earth, and that in some formerly poor areas of the world, it has reduced poverty. Nevertheless, it's also true that our capitalist system, in the various guises it has taken and in the ways it has evolved, oppresses, exploits, excludes, impoverishes, and otherwise harms many people on earth, and the earth itself. Again, it's from the perspective of the people most harmed who live in those

regions of the earth most harmed that the Pope writes.

While calling for structural and systemic change, the Pope goes deeper by calling for the transformation of human hearts and minds, particularly in people's attitude toward the earth. Many people have declared their *independence from* the earth, failing to recognize or appreciate their *interdependence with* the earth. Many see themselves as a subject and the earth as an object. An object they have the right to master, manipulate, and control. An object that exists solely to meet human need and fulfill human desire. An object upon which they can exercise unrestrained power with the technology at their disposal. An object from which they have the right to reap unlimited profit.

Once the human being declares independence, the Pope writes, the very foundations of our life begin to crumble, for instead of carrying out our role as a cooperator with God in the work of creation, humanity sets itself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature (117).

That's a powerful statement. Because humanity has rebelled against God by setting ourselves up in place of God, we have provoked the rest of nature to rebel against us. Because humanity has failed to take its proper place upon the earth, the earth itself cries out against us: foul!

As I hope you can see, the Pope's Encyclical offers quite a lot to reflect upon. I hope many of you read the Encyclical, and I look forward to discussing it with you on September 13 following worship. Please choose one or two of the numbered paragraphs in the Encyclical that stand out for you--something you find powerful or particularly insightful, or something with which you disagree--and come prepared to share your thoughts and responses with the rest of us.

Discussion of the Pope's Encyclical Sunday, September 13th after worship

Please join us for a **two-part study and reflection on Pope Francis' Encyclical on climate change, Laudato Si**. The first meeting took place on Saturday, August 22nd at the home of Liz and Reuel Nash. If you were unable to make it to the first meeting, not to worry! On **Sunday, September 13, the Green Team** will host the second gathering **at church after worship** to reflect on the document, which is a very strong pronouncement not only on climate change, but on political and economic justice. If you need a copy of the encyclical, they are available on line (Google it), or send Tom V an e-mail (revtomv@swbell.net) and he'll send you a PDF copy. If you can bring a copy of the document on your computer or tablet to the meeting, that will help. The document is long and it covers a lot of ground, so there is plenty to talk about.

Church Leadership

Trustee Co-Chairs	Don Brown & Bill Campbell
Deacons Chair	Janet Parsons
Outreach Team	Reuel Nash & John Goff
Moderator Co-Chairs	Barbara Burnham & Bill Beardall
Treasurer	Gail Christeson
Financial Secretary	Pam Tucker
Christian Education	Rachel Dietz
Coordinators	John Burlinson
Clerk	Betty Bodman
Historians	Pat & Mel Oakes
Web mistress	Sara Ross
Member-At-Large	Bill Beardall

Personals

by Pat Oakes

Pam Tucker had her last chemo session for breast cancer on **August 7** and really celebrated several weeks later when she was feeling better. She is looking forward to having some energy, having food taste good again, and getting past chemo brain. She is expecting that her surgery will be in mid-September and that will possibly be followed with radiation. She is hoping and praying that she will not have to have the radiation treatments, but that will not be decided until after the results of the surgery are known. Keep **Pam, Allison, Savanna, and Harrison** in your prayers.

Victoria Li is looking forward to a big change in her life. Effective **Sept. 9**, Victoria will resign as **Watershed Protection Department Director** for the **City of Austin** after 10 years of service. According to a memo sent by City Manager Marc Ott to Mayor Steve Adler and City Council, Ott wrote, "Ms. Li has guided the department – and the City – through some of the toughest challenges and biggest opportunities in recent history. Her leadership on projects like **Onion Creek**, the **Waller Creek Tunnel**, and the purchase of **Water Quality Protection Lands** will have an impact on this community for decades to come. Her spirit for innovation helped create new programs to incorporate green building techniques in to traditional flood management infrastructure and cleared the way for staff to create ATXFloods.com. She has challenged us to think differently about the management of our watershed and flood mitigation systems, and Austin is a better place for it." Both **Victoria** and her husband **Bill Campbell** are hoping to have more time to relax and to spend more time with her new grandson, who lives in **Houston**.

Congratulations to **Alex VandeStadt**, who is working on her **M. Ed** at **Trinity University** in **San Antonio**. She started the program right after graduating with her B.A. in May. She passed her first teacher's certification exam, and is student teaching **2nd grade** at **Woodridge Elementary School** in San Antonio. **Robin** and **Tom** saw her on Sunday, Aug. 23rd, and report that she is very happy and excited to be doing what she loves.

Debbie Appel Knowlton, along with husband **Bob** (who came for a long weekend) and **Emily** and **Sam**, were in town for more than a week to visit with her dad **Vic** and his wife **Betty**. We enjoyed having a pew full of Appels two Sundays in a row. It is hard to believe that Emily is entering high school this year.



8/16/15 Debbie Appel Knowlton, Emily, Sam, and Bob Knowlton were at church with Vic Appel

Norma Hawes and **Steve Domingue** had a wonderful visit "down East" and the **Maritimes of Canada**. Norma sent this report. "Steve's condensed version: We took hikes, we ate lobster, we saw puffins." Norma continues, "We also saw the **Bay of Fundy** from four different vantage points, witnessed 2 tidal bores, and low and high tides at **Hopewell Rocks** in **New Brunswick**. We went to **Halifax, Nova Scotia**, to the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. We took in the wonderful vista of **Peggy's Cove** for our first glimpse of the Atlantic Ocean. We saw lots more of the Atlantic while traveling in **Cape Breton**, where we drove the entire **Cabot Trail**. Cape Breton was our favorite part of the Maritimes, with so many beautiful views of the Atlantic on one side, and the **Gulf of St. Lawrence** on the other, with **Bras D'or Lake**, actually a huge inland sea, in the middle. The temperature never got above mid-70's. One of our favorite experiences was a boat tour to **Bird Island** where we saw LOTS of puffins, as well as as other marine life including gray seals. We took the ferry from Nova Scotia to **Prince Edward Island**, but it was so overrun with tourists we didn't stay but a couple of days. We didn't dare visit Caven-

dish or Green Gables because we knew it would be swamped with tourists, little red-haired girls in particular. Upon returning to **Bangor** where we were to catch our flight back to Texas, we decided to visit **Acadia National Park** where we camped in 2004. Again, it was the peak of the tourist season, and so overcrowded that we made as hasty an exit as possible. Luckily, we discovered that there is another part to Acadia that is not so popular: the **Schoodic Peninsula** just to the east of **Mount Desert Island** was simply lovely, and so uncrowded we actually had an entire beach all to ourselves. To picnic, not to swim!"



8/16/15 It is a joy to have the Howicz family back in town.

Jen Howicz reports, "The Howiczes are settling into their new home in **Round Rock**. We had a wonderful August reconnecting with old friends at church, work, soccer and Girl Scouts. We are especially grateful for the warm reception on returning to the church - we missed everyone more than we can say!"

We've been missing **Beth Gleason**, but she has been really busy working with children on Sundays at a Presbyterian church in **Westlake** and doing supply preaching (most of August at Weimar UCC). Both were fun, she says. Beth hopes to see us soon.

New member of the church, **Chuck Jackson**, had concerning news for all of us on Sunday, the **23rd of August**. His lung biopsies from the week prior were, indeed, cancerous. They are metastasized areas from another cancer he had several years ago.

He knows the prognosis is terminal, but the doctors hope he will have a year or two. Chuck is philosophical and says, "I am so glad I found this congregation when I did." We are, too, Chuck, and we will be by your side and you will be in our prayers as you make this journey.

It is a joy to have **Stephen Russell** back in our midst. Stephen grew up in the church when his dad, **Rev. Rollin Russell**, was the associate conference minister for the **South Central Conference**. Most recently he has been on the faculty at the **University of Arizona**, but now is the **Priscilla Pond Flawn Professor** on the faculty at **UT** in the department of child development. His spouse **Scott Neeley**, an architect in **Tucson**, will be commuting back and forth while he is finishing up projects there. He and Stephen have rented a condo at **Cambridge Towers** at Lavaca and MLK.



8/9/15 Old friends Stephen Russell and Paula Fracasso enjoyed a visit at coffee hour.

Longtime members of the church will remember **Dennis and Kazuko Schneider** who were part of our church family in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Dennis and Kazuko and their daughter **Takako** moved back to **Japan** when Dennis finished his graduate degree at UT. Several years ago, Kazuko developed Alzheimer's and died from complications on May 4, 2015. Services were held for her in the Tokyo Union Church on July 19. Takako has married and lives with her husband and child in Washington state.

Heart of Texas Association News

September

by Liz Nash

Many of us are familiar with Eden Hills Communities (formerly Eden Home) in New Braunfels, the excellent Continuing Care Retirement Community that is home to many of our retired pastors and lay people. Eden Hills has a long history with the South Central Conference and is a member of the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries (CHHSM) of the United Church of Christ. In San Antonio, the Retirement Housing Foundation, a member of the CHHSM, has two affordable housing communities for older adults. Now, a new senior affordable housing community, Darson Marie Terrace, affiliated with the United Church of Christ through the Retirement Housing Foundation, has broken ground in San Antonio. It is a delight to me to know that the UCC continues to support this lifegiving and greatly needed work. I look forward to the time we can celebrate Darson Marie Terrace as it is completed.

We have two milestone celebrations coming up in October among our churches. On October 4th, Hope United in Georgetown will have its charter signing celebration, making our treasured church start an established church. We look forward to officially accepting the church into our Association after our Committee on Ministry votes on membership recommendation. Hope United will have dual affiliation with the UCC and the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ. On Sunday, October 11th, Friedens Church of Washington will be hosting their 125th anniversary celebration. In fact, the church has been doing a fantastic ministry all year to commemorate this occasion by collecting 125 (and often many more) pounds, boxes, cans, or packages of a different type of food each month to give to the local food pantry, as well as giving a substantial gift of school and hygiene kits at the Conference Annual Meeting. On August 30th, they dedicated a historical marker at the church. What great ways to celebrate!

One more upcoming celebration will honor a retired clergy friend and colleague at St. Peter's Church of Coupland. Rev. Dr. John Sumner, who now lives in Florida, will be named Pastor Emeritus on Sunday, October 25th. John had a deeply appreciated and vibrant ministry at Coupland, and this promises to be a joyous time to honor the life he and Irene shared with the church.

The Fall Meeting of the Heart of Texas Association is coming up on October 31st, 10 am through lunch (9:30 registration). Tentatively, the meeting is set at Trinity Church of Austin, 4001 Speedway, pending recommendation by the Association Committee on Ministry for membership with dual affiliation as a United Methodist and UCC church. One very important reminder: each church will receive a copy of the Association draft Constitution and Bylaws. We strongly encourage our members to read it and send suggestions to Association Moderator, John Boydston (jrbnews@gmail.com). We want to have a final draft ready for our Association vote. We appreciate your help.

Blessings in Christ

Liz Nash

Heart of Texas Association Minister

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It was with great joy that the congregation participated in the baptism of 4-month-old **Abigail Rosemary Lytle** on **Sunday, August 23rd**. In addition to her parents, **Zac** and **Heather Lytle**, in attendance were Heather's parents **Valerie** and **Rick Sponsel**, Heather's brother and the godfather **Alistair Sponsel**, his wife **Laura Stark**, the godmother **Rachel Stone**, and a number of friends. Heather (who is an Ob/Gyn), Zac (who works in low-income housing) and baby Abi will be leaving for **Malawi** for a 2-year stint at a hospital in the capital city of **Lilongwe**. We are hoping that they will be able to worship with us one more time before they leave--and also that they will stay in touch with our Sunday school students via e-mail.



8/23/15 Baptism Sunday for Abigail Rosemary Lytle Tom VandeStadt, Laura Stark (Heather's sister-in-law), grandparents Valerie and Rick Sponsel Heather, Abigail, and Zac Lytle, Alistair Sponsel, (Heather's brother and the godfather) and Rachel Stone, godmother



8/9/15 Emily and Martin Garrison were in church--a busman's holiday for Martin on vacation from his UCC church in Coupland

Mel and **Pat Oakes** had a wonderful time at Pat's family reunion in **Hilton Head, SC**, from July 11-18. Pat's two sisters and brother were there as were almost all of the family--missing one niece and one of sister Nancy's sons-in-law. There were 43 in attendance--21 of them being children ranging in age from 11 months to 16 years old. All 11 of the Oakes family members were there--a joy to see everyone in one place. Their three-year-old grandson **Durham**, an only child, was in hog heaven and kept inquiring where all of his "brothers" were so they could play!



7/14/15 The Oakes family--back--Eugene Buck, Ethan Buck, Beth Oakes (married to Eugene), Tony Deifell, married to Mardie Oakes, and their son Durham Deifell, Sarah Oakes and her husband Joe Pierce, Emily Buck--seated in front--Pat and Mel Oakes--at the family reunion at the Island Club Resort on Hilton Head Island in South Carolina

Former child caregiver and **Sunday school** teacher **Anna Kimberly** is doing well. She misses everyone at the church and all of the kiddos! She just finished her first year of school and has one more semester of school left, and then 6 months of clinical rotations. She is currently hoping to specialize in spinal cord injury rehab and will most likely be moving to **Dallas** for her rotations. She was glad to hear that **Amy** is still working with the kiddos. Anna says, "Please send everyone my love and let them know how much I miss the amazing community at the church."

While on their way to **Minneapolis** to meet the steamboat, **American Queen**, on **July 25th** for a cruise down the **Upper Mississippi**, **Marilyn Gaddis** and **George Carruthers** received word that they were now to meet her in **Cincinnati**. Marilyn just happened to check her e-mail and got the notification. The Mississippi was still too high for her to go under some bridges and to dock safely. They were



8/16/15 Debbie Appel Knowlton initiated this photo of long-time folks at the church.

Bob Knowlton took this photo of Pat and Mel Oakes, Tommie and Doyal Pinkard (who were celebrating their 66th wedding anniversary!), Stephen Russell, Vic Appel with Debbie, Rambie Briggs, Dave and Sara Ross, Cathy Hubbs, Fran Briggs, and Nodie Murphy

able to do some quick rerouting, but about half of the “cruisers” cancelled the **Ohio River Tour**, so there was plenty of room at meals, on tours, and at shows. The river communities were very happy to see tourists since they had only recently taken down their flood gates. The “Hop-On Hop-Off” tours offered by the Queen are a great way to see a town and then ride back and spend more time at some places, especially the **National Quilt Museum in Paducah, Kentucky**, with its magnificent quilt displays. Having visited **Churchill Downs** and the **Slugger Museum** on a previous trip to **Louisville**, time was spent at the well-organized **Frazier International History Museum**. A “not seen before” tour of **St. Louis** filled time while waiting for the flight back to Austin after eight days of gourmet meals, comfortable accommodations, and great lectures and evening shows aboard the “Queen!”

Ranae Beeker, a nurse, moved to **Bremerton, WA**, several years ago but enjoys staying on the women's book club e-mail list. Our next book club selection is *Being Mortal* by **Dr. Atul Gawande**, a physician and patient advocate. The meeting is on **Thursday, September 17** at **Sara Ross's home**. Chaplain and church member **Jo Jensen** will be there to facilitate discussion. Ranae reports that she had the pleasure of working with Dr. Gawande at **The Brigham in Boston** as he was one of the surgeons on a committee she facilitated. Dr. Gawande has several shows on

PBS which can be viewed on PBS.org. Also, Ranae is delighted to be a first-time grandmother to **Eilif Kent Robbins**, who was born on **July 14** and weighed in at **8 lbs. 2 oz.** He is the son of her daughter **Alethea** and son-in-law **Willie Robbins**. Ahhh, Grammahood...



Will Harris (left) participated in his first junior tennis tournament, sponsored by the **NJTA** and the **Central Texas Tennis Association**, on **Saturday, August 22nd**. He and his mixed doubles partner, **Evelyn**, took home third place trophies! Here's a photo of them with their coach, **Coach Sofia**. Will just started playing tennis this summer, so he was really excited about winning a trophy!

Sarah Bentley and her husband **Bob Breihan** visited Bob's daughter and son-in-law, **Dr. Lauren Breihan** and **David Lang**, for 6 days of escape from the heat. The visit to **Flagstaff, AZ** (at 7000 feet elevation) gave them a chance to explore options for Bob to use portable oxygen and offset the effects of a partially functioning diaphragm. They were glad to discover that they can continue to visit them in this area of the country that is so beautiful and refreshing. Bob and Sarah were able to visit the wilderness area where the remains of Bob's daughter's son were discovered

last year following his disappearance on a solo wilderness hiking trip. They continue to evolve in their understanding and acceptance of this tragedy and Sarah and Bob are glad to report that Tom's brother, **Ben**, and his wife, **Addie**, will have a baby in 2016, bringing joy and hope to all of them following the hardship of losing Tom.



Paul Deisler served in the U.S. Navy during WWII.

It is with great sadness that I have to report on the death of **Paul Deisler** on **Aug. 5, 2015**, one of my most faithful correspondents, a pillar of the church who served in many capacities until he and his late wife **Ellen** moved to **Corpus Christi**. You can read Paul's obituary online at www.seasidefuneral.com, but I want to include Paul's last e-mail which arrived on June 29th, too late for the July-August Visitor. You can tell that Paul was living life to the fullest until the end. "You haven't heard from me because my daughter **Jane** and I went on a trip to **Alaska**, leaving **May 29th** and ending three weeks later, aboard the **Sea Bird**, a ship of the **National Geographic Society**, fully equipped with lecturing scientists. We also did a land trip to **Anchorage**, **Denali**, and **Fairbanks**. No sooner did we return to Corpus Christi than a case of walking pneumonia, which I apparently had before and during the trip, manifested itself. At the same time the chronic pain I have been suffering increased greatly. As you would expect, the trip was wonderful but when we returned to Texas, the pneumonia put me in the hospital, where I am to this day. However, the trip was so good that, had I known, I would have gone anyway. If you haven't been to Alaska by all means go! I had been before but Jane had not. I couldn't take part in the kayaking or white water rafting that Jane

did, but I got to visit with the captain on the bridge and enjoyed a virtual tour of the engine room. I don't know when I will get out of the hospital; it may be weeks or it may be months, but I am on my way. Once I am back, I will write you again. Even out of the hospital I may still be in recuperation, but, if the doctor is willing, I hope to be in **Chile** during December with my three children and my daughter-in-law." **Pastor Tom** led a service at **Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery** in **San Antonio** where Paul was interred next to his beloved wife Ellen. On Sunday, **September 6**, the church will host a service at **1:00 p.m.** to honor and give thanks for the life of **Paul Deisler**.

In early August, **Barbara Burnham** joined her friends **Gwen**, **Tim**, and **Joyce Piland**, from **San Angelo**, on a week's cruise to **Alaska**. They embarked at **Seattle** on the **Norwegian Pearl** (along with about 2,300 other people), sailed up the **Gulf of Alaska** to **Juneau**, and back through the **Inside Passage**. They had an excursion in Juneau around the city and to the beautiful **Mendenhall Glacier**. They next departed for **Skagway**, where they also had an excursion on a van up to **White Pass** (just short of the **Yukon**). They were in **British Columbia** at this point and had some impressive views of mountains, distant glaciers, and two waterfalls--**Pitchfork Falls** and **Bridal Falls**. Barbara had the pleasure of meeting a family of 16 Chinese-Americans who were traveling together, from infants to grandparents, and they were charming. The next day was the highlight of the trip, cruising around **Glacier Bay National Park**. They saw three tidewater glaciers that came down into the bay. There were park rangers on board to give us commentary. A couple of the glaciers were receding, but one was actually advancing! Barbara was stunned to learn that the area was considered to be a temperate rainforest. The day was misty, windy, and chilly, but that added a surreal quality to the park. Thereafter they went to village of **Ketchikan, Victoria, B.C.**, and back to Seattle. Not much in the way of whales, unfortunately, but it was a wonderful experience.

Liz Nash states, "We have a great group of youths at Congregational Church!" On **Sunday, July 5**, five of them and one adult-- **Katie Lemley**, **Cameron Goff**, **Megan Goff**, **Savanna Tucker**, **Alden Harris**, and



Megan Goff and Katie Lemley and team -- work finished!

Liz Nash -- met at **United Christian** to set off with our bigger than ever mission trip contingent (about 70 people) for a week in **Dallas** with **Reach Beyond Mission**. Our group this year included youth and adults from United; our three church youth group from **University Christian, University Baptist, and Congregational; Church of the Savior; and Friends Congregational**. After a lovely service of blessing at United and a send off potluck luncheon, we headed to our “home” for the next few days at **East Dallas Christian Church**. Monday through Thursday, groups worked each day either helping rehabilitate houses for low income folks in **Oak Cliff** and **Pleasant Grove** areas of Dallas through a City of Dallas program called **People Helping People**, or delivering meals to low income housing sites through one of the programs of CitySquare, a nonprofit that provides many substantial programs to address homelessness and poverty (<http://www.citysquare.org/>). Many of us were able to get to know the folks who lived where we were working -- a wonderful addition to our week. Each evening, we had speakers to help the group come to understand that poverty in Dallas has roots in institutional racism (it is no accident that we were working in Oak Cliff and Pleasant Grove) and to understand more about the social, cultural, and other institutional forces that shape who has access to good schools, the roots of wealth disparities, and other reasons for the income gaps that are so pervasive. Our worship time (planned and led by different parts of the group each day) and small group discussions helped us connect what we were learning with biblical themes -- to

make the connection between our faith and this work. We also visited the impressive **CitySquare** site and the **Juliet Fowler Communities**, a longtime **Disciples of Christ** ministry to children, youth, and seniors. On Friday, we ended with a day to play at **Six Flags in Arlington** and a night at a nearby church before heading home on Saturday morning.



Savanna Tucker on the road with the group

It was a terrific week in so many ways. **Cameron Goff** and **Katie Lemley** were honored as two of our four seniors in a session of sharing with the whole group that has become a tradition. We all made new friends and several of us reunited with friends from earlier trips-- these friendships last many years. Our church sent the most youth ever in the eight years we have been participating. **Reach Beyond Mission**, a 501c3, which was born out of these trips, is growing into an outstanding mission trip program, and we were really blessed to participate in it. Reach Beyond Mission’s director is **Mary Lu Johnston, Associate Minister** at **University Christian**, who brought our youth into the group they have been in over the past 8 years and who has ministered with deep care to our youth. Because of these trips, they are learning about life choices, including vocational choices, they can make to be part of the reign of God in their lives. Thanks for supporting us!

Meet Our Newest Members!



8/9/15 5 new members joined the church!
l-r--Chuck Jackson, Natasha Wright, Barbara Johnson, and Nettie Reynolds and her son Gibson

Chuck Jackson was born in **Tucson, AZ**, and raised in **Houston**. He has lived a total of **13 years** in **California** and two years in **Berlin**. He earned a degree in **biology** and did some graduate work in **genetics** but never worked in a scientific field. He served in the **Army** as a **German linguist**, was a **hippie** on a commune called **The Peaceable Kingdom** near **Navasota, TX**, built houses in California and was an owner of a company that built concrete homes. After moving back to Texas, spent over **20 years** as a **high-tech headhunter**. Also, for a few years, he wrote continuing education courses for the real estate and insurance industries. Chuck has lived in **Austin** for the last **5 years** and also lived here for 5 years in the 80s. He has **two sons**, both born in Austin; one lives here and one in Houston. He was introduced to this church through **Frances Alford**, a staunch member of the church years ago, whom he has known for **50 years**. Chuck says, "I have been a of spiritual seeker most of my life, exploring many disciplines. I grew up Presbyterian; was a Methodist for a while when the kids were young; attended a Quaker meeting for many years when they were older. The Congregational Church is the first church I have felt I am joining for myself, rather than for someone else. I am drawn to the church because of the openness and inclusiveness which seem to constitute its ground of being."

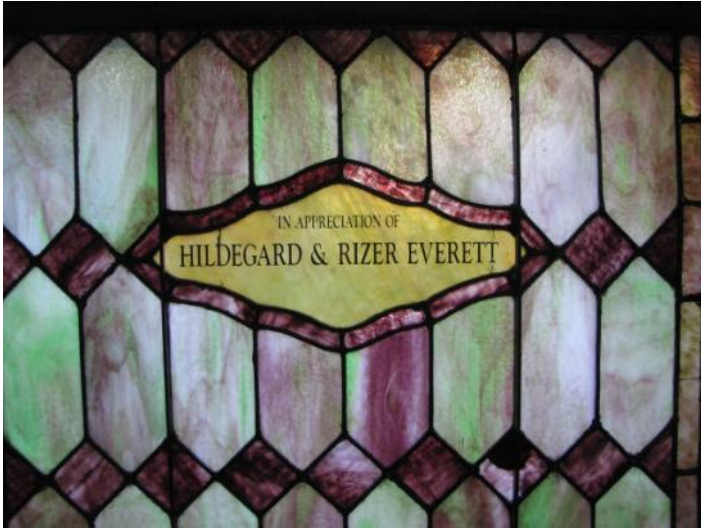
Natasha Wright was born in **Huntsville, AL**, but was raised in **Copperas Cove**. She is a transgender pre-op male to female. Natasha has been in **Austin**

for about **three years** and has worked for an 18 wheeler truck company called **RAW Trucking** for more than a year.

Barbara Johnson is best known at the church as **Warinda Harris's mother** and the grandmother of **Alden** and **William**, but she is a warm, lovely presence in her own right. Barbara is from **Lake Charles, LA**, and grew up attending **Woodbury UCC**, which until recently was a sister church of CCA. She moved to **Houston** when she married, but most of her family still lives in **Louisiana**. She is the **second of five sisters**, and she and her sisters are very close. Her younger daughter, **Tiffany**, teaches 6th grade math and social studies and is working on **Master's of Science in Mathematics** (Grades 5-8). Her niece, **Stephania Pearce**, and her younger sister **Toni Eaglin**, visited on **August 9** to watch Barbara become a CCA member. She raised her family in Houston and moved here to Austin to live with the Harris family several years ago. When she was working in Houston, she worked on an assembly line **building computers**. Ironically, she is not a big computer fan, but she is working on knowing her way around her computer.

Nettie Reynolds is a freelance writer and playwright. But most importantly, however, she is in her third year for her **Master's of Divinity** at **Austin Presbyterian Seminary** in order to become a full-time hospital chaplain. She currently works as a part-time **PRN chaplain** at **South Austin Medical Center (South St. David's)**. She has lived in the Austin area since **1989** and have **two children** - **Emma**, aged 19, who is in college at **UNT**, and **Gibson**, aged 15, who will be going to **McCallum High School** in the fall. Gibson loves to read and is a **Minecraft** enthusiast. He is also a comic artist and is very interested in doing stand-up comedy as well. He was the singer with the **Austin edUKEcation Ukestra** for two years and plays **ukulele**.

History Corner by Pat and Mel Oakes



9/21/14 Medallion on the pulpit side--In Appreciation of Hildegard and Rizer Everett

Dot Everett Waldrip (who lives in **Albuquerque**) is **Hildegard** (1915--2001) and **Rizer** (1916-2003) **Everett's daughter**. I wrote to her and asked her for some memories about her folks who were pillars of the church for many years. Here, with a bit of editing, is what Dot had to say.

Hildegard Kuehne was born **February 21, 1915**, in **Austin** in the house that her parents owned that was actually quite close to the church. The house has been made an historical landmark, though it was physically moved from where her mother was born to another lot in the neighborhood.



ca. 1925 Hildegard Kuehne--b. 1915



1918 Rizer Everett, age 2, with his Buster Brown haircut

Rizer was born in **Belmar, New Jersey**, on **June 9, 1916**. His paternal grandmother wouldn't allow his mother to deliver in that far off land of Texas, so his mother took a train up to New Jersey. Rizer was the

last son born in New Jersey; the other three were born in Austin.

Hildegard and Rizer actually met in **kindergarten**. Dot says, "Mother only spoke **German** when she began attending kindergarten. One day she was speaking in English telling her parents about 'IT.' 'It sat by me today. It played ball. It did this and It did that.' Her parents were convinced she was using the wrong English pronoun, so they asked if It was a boy or a girl. Mother answered that 'It has hair like a girl but it dresses like a boy.' Dad's father had insisted that his boys have the old fashioned Buster Brown haircut. So that's why Rizer was IT since kindergarten for Hildegard."

They both attended **Wooldridge School**, but after kindergarten, they ran in different circles. Rizer skipped a grade at some point, so he was a grade ahead of Hildegard. Then they attended **Austin High**. They did meet again (in a story often told by the couple) in a **photography class** at **UT** taught by Hildegard's father, **Dr. John Kuehne** (who was one of the early members of this church) who was in the physics department. The romance developed, so to speak, from there. Rizer went to work for **Carter Oil Company**, which was the producing company for **Humble**.

They were married **June 26, 1938**, and since Rizer was a geologist, they lived in **Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, South Dakota, Wyoming, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma**, and several of those places two or three times before **Dot** was born in **1943**. Their move to **Indonesia** in **1954** was their **28th move**. The company in Indonesia was essentially **Exxon**. Rizer was, as he liked to say, an Exxon annuitant. Dot believes they returned to the **States** in **1966**. Hildegard and Rizer traveled extensively in **Asia, Europe, Africa, South and Central America**, in the **United States, Mexico, and Canada**, and loved every minute of it. Dot and her brother **John** attended boarding schools in **India** for much of their education.

Dot says, "They loved coming back to Austin into the church. It meant a great deal to Mom and to Dad. When I was a child, my grandparents (the Kuehnes)

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History Corner (continued)
by Pat and Mel Oakes

were so close to all those people in the congregation, I thought we were related to many of them, especially **Marie Clark**. I think I was 16 by the time I figured out that we weren't really related to her, though what a wonderful person she was; what a wonderful friend to all of us."

"That church, that physical space, figures in so many of my memories from the time I was born. In recent years when I've gone back, I realize that the windows in the sanctuary form the core of my belief in God and understanding of Jesus and Christianity. Not a bad way to teach a child. When I think of coming back to Austin, it is returning to that sanctuary that I picture--the trio playing, **Eleanor (Towery)** and Mother in the fellowship kitchen making coffee, **John Towery** giving one of his too deep sermons, my grandfather and grandmother sitting in the second pew on the west side, and little **Chesy Towery** squirming in his seat." Thanks for the memories, Dot!!

I still remember greeting this lovely "new" older couple who had come to church one Sunday--little realizing their long history with the church! —Pat



1987 Hildegard and Rizer Everett at the church